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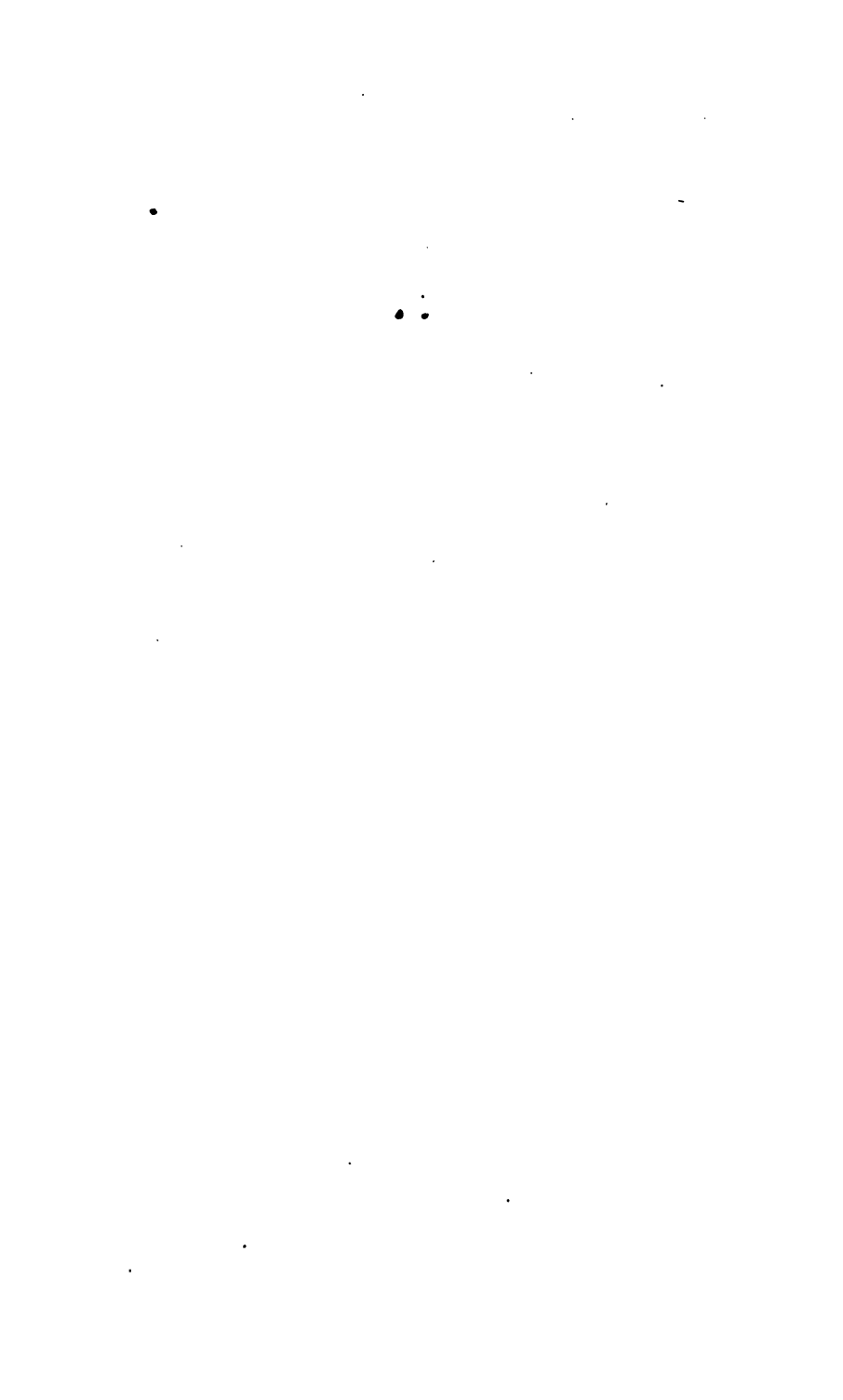




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SOME
ANSWER TO THE ENQUIRY;
WHY ARE YOU BECOME
A CATHOLIC?

IN
A LETTER TO A FRIEND,



BY
RICHARD WALDO SIBTHORP, B.D.

LATE MINISTER OF ST. JAMES'S, RYDE, ISLE OF WIGHT.

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SOME ANSWER,

§c. §c.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You enquire of me the reasons of my secession from the Anglican to the Catholic Church. Your letter is one of so many that have been addressed to me, with a similar enquiry, that I am almost constrained to resort to the assistance of the press that I may reply to them all. It is by no means agreeable to one, whose life has for some years been a continuous discharge of unobtrusive ministerial duties, thus to keep himself under public observation, and to anticipate the controversial notices, the critical remarks, the severe judgment, which the publication of his sentiments may possibly call forth. But besides the pressing duty of replying to many earnest and candid enquirers, and the still more urgent one, of not permitting any of these, so far as in me lies, to conclude their questions unanswerable, and their objections to the step I have taken incapable of a reply; the conviction that there is a selfishness in the love of privacy which must be withstood, whenever the interests of the Saviour's Kingdom and the unity of the Church may be promoted by the opposite conduct, determine me to sacrifice my own feelings to what better judges than myself deem the call of duty, and to commit to print some of my reasons in answer to the question, "Why have you become a Catholic?"

I beg you to observe, that in this letter I give you only some of my reasons, though confessedly such as chiefly have weight with me. I give you them, also, rather in outline, than in full detail; as hints for reflections, which your own religious knowledge and acquaintance with the controversies of the present day, will supply, rather than elaborate arguments. I give you them in the integrity of my heart, as sentiments I hold; in devout prayer to God for his blessing, as truth profitable for all; and in unaffected good will

towards those who differ from me, as matters peculiarly claiming to be treated of with courtesy, forbearance, and charity. Every enquirer, with scarcely an exception, has addressed me with a kindness of language and sentiment, as creditable to themselves, as considerate towards me. And far, then, be it from me, my dear friend, not to give utterance to the real sentiments of my own heart, or to allow myself, while avowing and delineating my separation from these my correspondents, and thereby my disapproval of their opinions, to show any want of real esteem for all, of cordial friendship for many, of unaltered affection for others among them. Besides, "the servant of the Lord must not wrangle" under any circumstances. I disavow, then, every harsh expression, if such escape me. If in self-defence I seem to condemn others, I pre-condemn myself if I do so in other language than the fair statement of my own views may require. If I fail to exhibit Christian courtesy and kindness, I humbly ask forgiveness of yourself, and all for whom this letter is penned: but especially I ask it of our common Lord and God. May the spirit of truth and of charity ever guide the pens of those who profess to advocate the cause of both!

I judge that I shall best consult your wishes, and most satisfactorily answer the enquiries made of me, if, instead of a formal arrangement of arguments, or of reasons drawn up both *pro* and *con*, I give a kind of narrative of what has been passing in my own mind, and has issued in my being now a member of the Catholic Church, in communion with the See of Rome. You are aware that in early life I sought admission into that Church, and, but for the interference of the law, being then under age, should have joined her. Though upon the closest scrutiny of my own heart, I am not conscious of insincerity in my past profession of Protestant principles as a clergyman of the Established Church, yet I freely confess that the remembrance of devotional feelings I then had (almost the first meet to be so called which I remember to have had) never entirely quitted me during subsequent years. I never forgot what had forcibly impressed me, leading to the effort I then made

to join the Catholic Church, the apparent devotedness to religious duties, the supreme place which these seemed to have in their regard, the cheerfulness yet earnestness of piety, which marked some members of their communion, whom I then met with. I had found little of these things among my Protestant acquaintance,—my misfortune, doubtless; but so it was. Conceiving that religion, if anything, should be the chief thing with every man; knowing it, on divine authority, declared to be, “the one thing needful:” when I seemed to find it so esteemed by Catholics, and knew it not to be so esteemed by most of my Protestant acquaintance, but holding quite a secondary and accidental place in their regard, I not unreasonably judged these latter wrong, and those right. I sought to connect myself with the former in the enjoyment of privileges they alone seemed to understand and value. My after acquaintance with both has shown me how much error there was in my estimation of them;—that all Catholics are not in earnest, nor all Protestants indifferent about their salvation: far otherwise. Still an impression, and, in the main, a correct one, remained on my mind, that there was among members of the Catholic Church, a dedication to the claims and duties of Christianity, an admission of the influence of their belief upon their ordinary life and devotions,—a sort of absorbing interest in their religion, which sustained in me a lingering affection towards them, while I openly condemn what I honestly believed to be the errors of their creed. I often mourned that truth seemed to have less power than error (for such I long judged the distinctive creeds of Protestants and Catholics) to make men devoted to their God; and I could not but affectionately regard those whose religion appeared to be not a cold profession of faith, but an influential principle of daily life,—a source of animating hope, warm charity, lively devotion, and zealous efforts to make others *partakers of the same benefit*. How far these sentiments and feelings co-operated to my present position, God alone can judge.

About five years since, in the course of my ministry at Ryde, I was led to review the Jewish Economy, or

the Church under the Old Testament Dispensation. The subject came minutely under my notice while engaged in a series of lectures on the Levitical Law and institutions. You cannot require proof that these had a typical character. It is universally admitted, that they were typical of something better—"of good things to come;" from Israel viewed as a nation, down to the smallest ornaments of the tabernacle, respecting which Jehovah had said, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern which was showed thee in the mount." Where, then, was to be found this something better, thus accurately prefigured, thus largely and minutely typified? Where the antitype of this typical dispensation? I naturally sought it in a careful comparison of the Christian Dispensation with these types: and I found one immediate answer to my enquiry, and full of holy and consolatory instruction. They had an accomplishment in Christ, as is largely shown by the apostle to the Hebrews. He is the typified temple, high-priest, and victim; His blood and righteousness, mediation and intercession, ministry, character, and offices, were prefigured by what went before. He was the body of good things to come, of which they were the shadow. But it seemed not less evident to me, nor can seem, I think, to any attentive enquirer, that the types of the Mosaic economy had not their only accomplishment in the Blessed Saviour, or in Christ personally. He, it is clear, was not the typified Israel; nor the Mount Zion, nor the Holy City; nor solely the temple: neither did the shewbread, or incense, or seven-branched candlestick, or Levitical ministry, prefigure Him, or His work and office only. The types, like most of the prophecies and the psalms, have, then, a further application than to Christ, personally, or officially. But to whom or what? To his mystical body, the Church under the New Testament. None of these interesting portions of Holy Scripture can be rightly understood without the apprehension of this truth. The frequent assertion that all the shadows of the old law were accomplished in Christ alone, and that it is unnecessary to look for the body or substance of them elsewhere, is

hastily and ignorantly made ; altogether untenable, and, indeed, as inconsistent with other allowed views of most who make it, as with the whole tenor of Scripture. If all the typical institutions of the old dispensation found their sole and entire accomplishment in Christ, why are any continued in the Christian Church correspondent with them? Why are there any sacraments, any separate ordained ministry, any sacrifice, any visible form of the Church, if Christ alone absorbed, so to speak, the fulfilment of all that was typical of these in Himself personally? The Church should be as some sectarians hold it, purely spiritual, without distinct ministry, a Christian circumcision, or a Christian pass-over, holy days or ordinances, or visible constitution and government. Believers, as members of Christ, can then have nothing to do with these things, but have them all in Him, and need not look beyond. But if the Anglican Church is to be heard, there is, under the New Testament, an ordained ministry, two sacraments, and a corporate character of the Church, singularly accordant with correspondent Levitical institutions. If the primitive Church is to be heard, such was indisputably her view of those institutions. And Christ himself undoubtedly gave his Church a government, a ministry, and at least two holy ordinances of a peculiar character ; constituting her an holy kingdom, in the midst of the world, yet separated, from it, by distinctive truths, laws, worship, and institutions ; establishing her as his body on earth, in whom was still to be exhibited the substance of previous shadows ; still to be accomplished the Levitical types. In other words, the Church under the Old Testament, was a close type of the Church under the New, and not of her Divine Head only.

With this guiding truth, I proceeded to consider and connect some of the principal points in which the correspondence must exist between the typifying and the typified Church. I found the former to be a compact, united body, really and visibly united in all its parts ; combining a number of provincial and locally separate portions in one religious nation or people ; combining them in a most strict, perfect, and evident

unity of faith, of worship, of laws, of discipline, of religious ordinances, and even of minute ceremonies: no variety permitted,—no departure from the oneness demanded being sanctioned in any individual. Such was the ancient Israel; and if typical of the Church, such should be the Israel of God, under the New Testament. At the head of this body, nation, or Church, was one supreme dignitary, of priestly order, invested by God, with singular prerogatives, ruling in perpetual succession over Israel, until the Lord should come: in his person, offices, and residence, a centre of unity to the whole nation, far and near,—a representative on earth of the Divine High Priest in heaven. There was a regularly organized and consecrated tribe, of two degrees—Priests and Levites—separated by peculiar ordinances, and privileges, and duties, from the rest of Israel; having every office, every ceremony, every vestment, full of sacred significancy; continually engaged in sacrifice, and instruction of the people. The principal sacred rite of the nation was sacrifice; in its frequency, perpetuity, character, and circumstances, directing the worshippers to have in view a Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world. There was a real, and not merely spiritual, figurative, or imaginary presence of God himself in his earthly temple; which was also illumined with a seven-fold light, perpetually fed by holy oil. Sculptured cherubim and pourtrayed angels seemed to share in the sacred rites, and mingle in the worship, at once participating with, and ministering to, the holy nation in their prayers and adorations. There was an impressive and magnificent ritual, every ceremony of which was symbolic and instructive,—adapted alike to the present infirmity of man, needing such sensible aid, and to the glory of the majesty of God, who vouchsafed to receive from his creatures such homage, as expressive of their sense of his glory and greatness. Certain seasons were distinguished by peculiar impressive rites, commemorative of divine mercies, or events in the formation of the nation. From the Dan to the Beersheba of that land which was this ancient Church's appointed heritage

there was not an Israelite that lived not in fealty and submission to the supremacy of the one high priest; or that might lawfully, or without the heaviest anger of God, recognize or use any other sacred ministry than that of the tribe of Levi, and the house of Aaron; or that might condemn the appointed sacrifices, or live in wilful neglect of the most trivial sacred ordinances. Wherever an Israelite journeyed in that land, he found one creed, one faith, one religious rite, one harmonious agreement, even in the minutest points of ceremonial worship. He was at home everywhere as to his religion, for the Church of the Old Testament was purely Catholic, as to the given extent of its possession! Such were some of the great typical features of the ancient Israel, of which I had to seek for a correspondence in the Christian Church. The Mosaic dispensation led me then to look for a Church characterized by visible oneness,—by the strictest required holiness,—by Catholicity, as to the land of its inheritance (this being, under the Gospel, the whole earth),—by a supreme spiritual Rule, in a succession of individuals,—by unbroken pastoral descent from its first divinely selected office-bearers, the Apostles,—by continual daily sacrifice, directing the minds of the worshippers at once back to the great propitiatory offering of the Lamb of God, and upwards to the perpetual presentation of that propitiation before the Eternal Throne,—by a real, mysterious presence of Deity with her,—by a seven-fold channel of sacramental grace, illumined, and illuminating all within her sacred enclosure,—by angelic ministrations, and an intercourse intimate, though unseen, with those who see God,—by an impressive, magnificent, significant ritual,—by such an uniformity of doctrine, discipline, worship, and ceremonial, that from the north to the south, from the east to the west, there should not be a Christian that differed from another, or should not find, wherever he journeyed over the wide earth, the same religion he left at home. And what these typical considerations warranted me to expect, the prayer of the Blessed Saviour doubly warranted: “that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they

also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." St. Paul declared at once the same character of the Church, and the fact of its existence: "One body and one spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all."

Could I find this typified Church on earth? The truth of God assured me of its existence. But certainly no Protestant sect presented the slightest correspondence with it. My own, the Anglican, which promised fairest, totally failed to prove her claim, if indeed she made it, to be in the world what the Jewish Church was in the Holy Land. Facts were against her, declaring her very limited extent and insulated position unrecognized by the rest of Christendom. Her present constitution forbid her Catholicity. She had totally thrown off the recognition of that pastoral supremacy which from the sixth to the sixteenth century, she had admitted. Was the accomplishment of the glorious Levitical shadows to be found in a patchwork combination of a multitude of sects, as opposed in their interests as in their belief and worship? Could the typified holy—separated as to others, and as to themselves visibly united—nation, the one body of Christ, consist of a mixture of Prussian Lutherans, French Calvinists, and Swiss Socinians; of Independents, Baptists, Quakers, Shakers, of Irvingites, and Plymouth Brethren; of Methodists of the old and of the New Connexion; of New Jerusalemites, and Primitive Revivalists? Could such disorder be the designed fulfilment of a type of such holy order?—such disunion be the rightful substance of a shadow marked by an entire harmony of its parts, and perfect oneness of outline? Ingenuity could not trace a resemblance. But when I looked back to the primitive apostolic Church of the first six centuries, I found an exact correspondence with the type:—when I also looked back to the ancient Church of England, as first formed by St. Augustine, I found the most entire agreement, and an actual, visible, professed oneness, with that apostolic Church, as it had existed for six

centuries: it was a provincial limb of that vast Catholic body which was then co-extensive with the knowledge of Christianity. When I viewed it at any subsequent period down to the commencement of the sixteenth century, I met with the same unaltered character; and though the Catholic body had been lopped of some of its limbs by the severing strokes of heresy or schism, it still flourished a vigorous, stately, wide-expanded tree, the same in every essential, almost in every minute particular, which it had been, when the English branch first grew from out its sustaining, fostering trunk. The Catholic Church in communion with the see of Rome, stood forth, in my view, the close and perfect antitype of the Church under the Old Testament. She had still a branch, unsheltered, yet growing—feeble, yet full of hidden life—despised, yet fruitful—in my native land; and in joining myself to it, I felt that I should join myself to the Church of the whole earth,—the Church of twelve centuries in England, and of eighteen centuries in the world,—the Church of the shadowy dispensation that had comprehended the tribes of Israel, as they marched out of the land of Egypt under Moses and Aaron;—that I should join myself, in short, to the true Israel of God. All that the ancient types led me to look for in the Christian Church, I found in her alone. She stood forth, on scriptural grounds, the sole authorized claimant of God's favour and heritage. Separation from her, at any period, of any portion of mankind, did not invalidate her claims, nor affect her true Catholicity and unity, any more than the falling of a decayed limb destroys the claim of the trunk, with its remaining branches, to be the tree.

You will easily perceive, my dear friend, that I might go very much farther into the particulars of the close agreement of the Catholic Church with its Old Testament type; but I content myself with giving you some of the leading ideas, as they came before myself, and suggesting to you outlines, very imperfect indeed, yet, I trust, sufficient for you to fill up in your own reflections, from your own knowledge of scripture and ecclesiastical history. But I have dwelt longer upon this

topic of the Levitical types, because I have seldom found it more than hinted at in modern theological works; and because it became, from the cause I have already mentioned, that which first influenced my mind, presenting to it what seemed cogent reasons for regarding the Catholic Church, in communion with the see of Rome, as claiming my avowed allegiance. The fact which these last words declare,—the communion of the whole Catholic Church, in recognition of one supreme see and its possessor,—as it was one of the chief points of her correspondency with the Jewish type, so it became a principal one of my present consideration. The necessity of a centre of unity, for the well-being of the Church, as it had often at previous times been on my mind, now forcibly recurred. The sanctions of God to the office and authority of the high-priesthood of the Jews, I knew to be very solemn. His own institution, I knew that he upheld with jealousy the office, while he punished with severity the sins of some who filled it. The nation, I remembered, had flourished or decayed, both in spiritual and temporal matters, much as it respected this divine appointment, or otherwise.

Every well established kingdom has its central government, acting both as its faithful executive, and as that which combines together, regulates, and invigorates all the subordinate authorities, and otherwise scattered parts. It cannot subsist without it, any more than the body without a head. There is an analogy here between the natural works of the Creator and the rational institutions of men, which has its counterpart in the gracious dispensations of the Saviour. It would be incredible that he should leave his kingdom in the world, without any fixed government, or that government without an essential to all governments—a supreme executive and centre of unity. He instituted this for the Jewish Church, and left it not to accident to set it up or throw it down. The United States of America, full of wild notions of independence and equality, and of the self-governing rights of its different parts, admit the existence and power of one continuing, supreme, central government, essential to the conser-

vation of the body politic. What would be a body without a head? and how often is the Church described as a body of which all the parts are harmoniously fitted in, for the efficient movement of the whole to its intended end! Previous then to the revelation of the Gospel, my belief in the wisdom of the Divine Author of Christianity would lead me to expect the institution and development of a centre of unity and government in the Church. The Mosaic type confirms the expectation. Be it observed that the fundamental principle of Protestantism, under every form, rejects it; setting at defiance the testimony of nature, reason, fact, antiquity, and Scripture,—I fear, because that combined testimony forbids the anarchy and self-will on which its results are based, and not solely, as is sometimes adduced, because the power of rule had been abused.

There is in the New Testament, a remarkable promise given to one of the twelve apostles (St. Matt. xvi. 16-19), which we must view in connexion with an extraordinary exhortation afterwards addressed to him (St. John xxi. 15-17), and a very peculiar position held by him (Acts ii. iii. iv. x. xii.): all which also, from the striking accordance with the Jewish type which they give the Christian Church, warrant the inference that the Lord in his kingdom, his body, his family, his household, acts on the same principle and plan on which he has acted in nature, and guided man to act in ordinary arrangements of this life. It is not correct that what is allowed to have been once appropriated to St. Peter was afterwards made common to all the apostles. No other apostle shared his office in the formation of the Church. To no other apostle was such a solemn exhortation given, to feed the flock of God, as to him. And though the Lord did afterwards give the power of the keys to all the apostles, that no more affected the previous distinction of the separate gift to him, (see St. Matthew xvi. 16), than the Lord's calling all his apostles beloved, affects the claim of St. John to be pre-eminently "*the beloved disciple*." Briefly, but sufficiently, is the establishment of a centre of unity for his Church declared by Christ; while it was left to

the providence of God, (not to accident), to develop in time its design, growth, and prerogatives. The essential value of the rock to the building fitted into it, was to be shown as the building rose, and the added weight, and the rising height, and the lofty towers; and the power of the fierce winds, and the beating waves without, and the slow attacks of wasting time, developed, and so to speak, called into trial and proof, its solidity and use.

I think that, upon reflection, you will see that the case could not well have been otherwise, than as I have now hinted it. For the Saviour gave no intimation of the time of his absence, but left his Church in constant expectation of his return. What he left her, he expected to find her, so constituted and so united, whether he delayed his coming for twenty or two thousand years. Had this event occurred during St. Peter's lifetime, no farther development of a primacy and centre of unity in the Church had taken place; no successor of the apostle been needed. But as it was otherwise, when he died to whom the special promise and charge had been given, another took his position, to occupy it, and continue the Church in her divinely arranged and existing constitution, if haply the Lord should come in his days. And thus another and another have successively filled the chair of St. Peter for eighteen hundred years, on the same warrant, with the same design, and the same darkness as to the Lord's time of return: that warrant, Christ's words to St. Peter;—that design, the good rule and unity of his Church and Kingdom;—that darkness, the purpose of God (Acts i. 7); herein accomplishing the type of the continuous high-priesthood of the Jews; and no more, than that type did, discrediting or displaying the heavenly high-priesthood and rule of Christ; neither the one, nor other, entrenching on his prerogatives, or usurping his power. The development of this most wise and essential institution for the Church's well-being, was in the nature of the case gradual. The strength, properties, and usefulness of a plant, can only be developed as time permits its growth, and natural influences elicit its generic or speci-

fic characters. Every added inch, and expanding leaf and swelling bud, leads the beholder to infer these. Thus, it was not to be expected, that in the second and third centuries there would be found, even had there been fuller documents, that clear perception of the designed succession to St. Peter, which the ninth and tenth centuries present; because, in a degree, its continuance was the development of the perpetuity of the design, and its use, power, and prerogatives, were tested by the circumstances of the Church. But there is a very clear and ample recognition of it in the early Fathers; and most decisive confirmation of the fact of the existence of the primacy of the chair of St. Peter, and of its universal estimation as the centre of unity to the kingdom of the Church. Nor can any one, I conceive, impartially review the history of the world, and not perceive the real value of the institution. Has it operated perfectly, and to unmingled good? By no means. The corruption of man has greatly marred the wise design of God. But, nevertheless, it has operated most beneficially, as far as the Church, and the condition of society, and social order, and practical benevolence, and the best interests of mankind, are concerned. It has failed to hold together the whole Christian family in holy harmony and discipline, such as angels might admire, only because all the members of that family have not been what they were called of God to be. Still, like some pilot sent from heaven, it has guided the vessel of the Catholic Church over the agitated seas and heaving billows of eighteen hundred years of strife, and tumult, and warfare, and tribulations of every kind, presenting her yet a goodly vessel, unwrecked, and cheerily pursuing her onward appointed course. It has maintained holy order and discipline among her motley crew, assimilating them, though gathered from every tribe under heaven, in duties, hopes, trials, and joys; it has kept them one, whom nature had divided, but grace again had united. How fearfully different is the fate of those who are separated from the see of Rome! Do they form an united band? Is there communion, or even mutual intercourse among

fact: a deep, unbroken, continuous of many orders, under two or three like the floating continents of some imaginary world driven west and there on the restless waves of private opinion and individual interpretation of Scripture. A few indeed, it seems little more than waiting to sail the vessel of the Church as she ever moves it still, and to keep on board if not a century, but certainly many years, or a hundred; but the most part—some of months and some of tedious longness, and some of sudden effort, struggling for life, present a sad spectacle of the distress, danger, and ruin which men bring on themselves by renunciation of their voice and rule, which God himself has sustained.

Some Protestants have owned the want of a record of unity for the Church. Bishop Horsley is said to have remarked: "We want a patriarch of the west." But is it of the west, why not of the whole Church? The answer has demanded the one, call for the other with manifold greater urgency. The succession to St. Peter, and to the primacy and charge given to him, seems to us a perfectly similar case with that of the apostolic succession in line of bishops. "Lo, I am with you always" said Christ to the apostles, "even to the consummation of all things." They to whom these words were spoken died, and their successors took their place to execute their charge, and hand down the promises made, and perpetuate the powers given to them; thus, the Church might be ever governed and managed as the Lord directed it while on earth:—so was it with the Supreme Bishop.

It need hardly be observed, that the permanency of the succession, and of the powers inherent in those who bear the office, whether of chief, or other bishop, cannot be affected by the misconduct of the individuals bearing it. The wickedness of the high-priests did not annul the institution of the office, which continued, notwithstanding many irregularities, to the end of the Jewish Dispensation. Judas was not less an apostle, however he was a son of perdition: nor did his ministry be
 be and regard from those he was sent to, nor does

it appear to have been less owned by God. In the possession, then, of this essential of the Church, as of every living body, and well-regulated kingdom, a centre of unity, the Catholic Church stands alone: and in this particular she appeared to me to have a well-founded right to be regarded as that which she claims to be, the one true Church. And it is the recognition of this claim, arising from due consideration of the principle which it involves, which must be a first step towards the restoration of unity, and to any effectual measures for remedying the disasters of the sixteenth century, and placing the Christian family once more in the position Christ left, and desires to find it. The severed limbs, if such they be, must reunite with the trunk, through recognition of, and union with, the head.

But there are other reflections upon the unity of the Church, and the reality, visibility, and permanency of that unity, which, as the more frequently I recur to them, the more sound and weighty they seem, so I now proceed to lay them before you. They are reflections shared by many in common with myself, though, for various reasons, (some of which I shall advert to) they seldom issue in the same result, as has taken place in my case.

The Church is a positive institution of Christ for the diffusion and maintenance of his religion throughout the whole earth, until his coming again. That religion is harmonious and immutable truth. There is not one system or set of truths for one age or part of the world, and a different one for another. Nor will there be another revelation of saving truth. The Church, as the Lord instituted it, must be the most wise and suitable appointment for the accomplishment of his gracious purposes towards mankind by means of it. There is not only all absence of proof that He either instituted or sanctioned different forms of government and modes of worship, and a variety of discipline, but everything to warrant the certainty of a contrary conclusion: and every deviation, therefore, from that government or form of His Church which He gave it, and from that discipline and worship which He personally, or by His

apostles, approved, is a most presumptuous innovation; and a daring disregard of the Divine will, and fraught with danger to the souls of men: for if saving truth be one, it is of consequence that all men be kept in an harmonious profession of it. Whatever has a clear and direct tendency to foster diversity of sentiment and of action, is hostile to the unity of the spirit. But it is evident that difference of worship, and Church discipline, as it is called, is destructive of the bond of peace, and so affects the unity of the spirit: it endangers harmonious profession of truth, and so affects truth itself, by affecting the institution designed to uphold and diffuse it. The universality and unity of the Church are, therefore, properly inseparable:—in other words, if the Church of Christ was designed to be universal for the diffusion and perpetuity of a system of saving truth, it was necessarily designed to be one: variety being opposed to the purpose of its universality, and so endangering its efficiency.

It is very generally maintained by Protestants, (except by some who take another ground, which I shall afterwards notice), that the only unity designed by Christ for his Church, is spiritual unity,—a unity in the reception of certain doctrines distinguished as *fundamental*, in holiness of life, and in certain interior consolations and privileges of true piety. It is affirmed that the family and household of Christ may properly consist of a number of different families, varying extremely in government, discipline, laws, institutions, and worship. A strange idea is this of an united people, and not very accordant with St. Paul's description of the mystical body of Christ, as given in various parts of his Epistles!

And is there any intimation of such design of Christ, respecting his Church, in either the Old or New Testament? Is it to be collected either from the types of the former, or the descriptions and history of the latter? There were, of course, different provincial and local churches, and must be while the family of man is locally divided, but all these churches were united in government, discipline, worship, and sacraments. Rome and Ephesus, Corinth and Philippi, Sardis and Philadelphia,

were distinct Churches only as to their locality ;—their members differing indeed, in degree of piety and of consistency of profession, but the same in every point of doctrine, discipline, and worship. They had one and the same baptism, altar, apostolic rule, episcopacy, ordained ministry, and communion with St. Peter, while he lived, and his successors in Rome after his death. Ecclesiastical history annihilates altogether the supposition that in the primitive Church existed various differing denominations, some having sacraments, some none ; some governed by bishops, some rejecting episcopacy ; some having a form of worship, some abhorring it ; some baptizing infants, and some refusing to baptize them. There is not a shadow of ground for such an idea : it is absolutely incompatible with the admission of the truth of ecclesiastical history. How comes it then, that so unscriptural, so preposterous, so untenable a position is maintained, as that the Church of Christ properly comprehends all varying denominations of Christians, or individuals in them all ? Seeing, too, that in its practical working, it is so subversive of unity, and prejudicial to the universality of the Church, and so to the spread of truth, and thereby to the accomplishment of the design of Redemption ?

Is this position so stoutly maintained simply for the sake of consistency ; and that Protestants may not seem to allow their own foundations to be overthrown ? It is not well to be consistent to the endangering the best interests of man. Or is it because that in most of these existing bodies of professed Christians, some are found giving much proof of the reality of their personal piety and of their individual participation of the grace of God ? I admit the fact, but I deny what it is supposed to prove.

God is a Being of infinite mercy. He has a mind of love towards his creatures ; but very specially and undeniably towards the fallen children of Adam. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to redeem it. It is consistent with this fact, and not at all inconsistent with the maintenance of the supreme divine rights of the Church, and of her sole claim to

the incorporation with her of all the members of Christ and heirs of eternal life, that there may be out of her, those who yet are not necessarily to be deemed excluded from the final and most inestimable blessing of salvation. There may be a unity of the spirit, where there is not the bond of visible communion. The Church has, so to speak, both a body and a soul; an outward and visible form, and an inward pervading spirit;—the former, God's constitution—the latter, his gift. The power and operation of the latter may extend beyond the sphere and limits of the former; so as to include within it more than the former may seem to do. Some then, or many, may belong to the soul of the Church, who are not of its body. When we see persons loving truth, and desirous of embracing it as far as it is known to them, eschewing evil, and doing good; persons pursuing after holiness, and aiming to live in the love of God and of their neighbours; devout, benevolent, given to all good works,—these we may consider as bound to the Church by unity of spirit, though not attached to her by the bond of visible union. They are pervaded by her soul, though not incorporated with her body.* She claims them as her children, prays for their complete and outward union, and leaves them in the hands of that divine love, which has, she trusts, included them in its wide and infinite apprehension, to associate them fully with her in time, or, if not, in eternity. Their present errors being not persisted in against the clear perceptions of light or convictions of conscience, while she seeks, in obedience to the will of God, to give them that light, she forbids not the hope or belief, that they may receive it hereafter in the region of perfect light, love, and holiness. It is scripturally clear that God, however jealous of his own laws, has not cut off from his favour, those who, from causes of which He is the perfect judge, have followed a less excellent rule, as in the case of the polygamy of the patriarchs and David. Yet who will defend their conduct, or question the divine law? (Genesis ii. 24.—Matt. xix. 4-6.) That, therefore, which influences many amiable persons to adopt this notion, of the Church being a large body

* See note at end.

made up of numerous discordant bodies, is not a sufficient or just ground for the opinion.

In truth, Protestants find themselves under a necessity of defending this notion in some way or other, or else abandoning the maintenance of their present separation from the Catholic Church, and admitting the duty of a return to it. The Church, say they, must be allowed to consist of all denominations, however varying externally, so long as they agree in fundamental truths, or else we must return whence we came, and whither we do not choose to return. You, my dear friend, must often have heard, in substance, this statement. Is it not singular, that no two of these denominations agree in fundamental truths? for they would not give you the same list of them. I doubt whether two ministers of any one of these bodies, are prepared to say they entirely agree as to what these fundamental truths are, or how many the term comprehends. That is a strange test of agreement, concerning which all are disagreed. Now, in the Catholic Church there is no disagreement whatever; every priest, from one end of the earth to the other,—every properly instructed member of the Church, in all the earth, concurs in the confession of the same faith. “There is one body and one spirit; one Lord, one faith, one baptism:” whereas, among Protestants, there is not only disagreement, but no agreement amongst themselves, as to those truths, of which themselves affirm it necessary to agree in belief, in order to constitute membership in the Church of God.

There is, however, another, a numerous and highly respectable class of persons, who admit the necessity of a complete and visible unity of the Church; anathematizing, indeed, that lax and purely Protestant notion of an harmonious body made up of discordant parts; of unity in the spirit, consisting with diversity of interests actively pursued, and with exclusiveness as to Church communion; of the bond of peace being held amid exclusion from each other's altars, and loud condemnation of each other's doctrines and worship; of ecclesiastical order without discipline, and of godly obedience without supreme government. This class is

almost exclusively found within the Established Church of England. Their view, on which they (in great part) justify their continuance in their present position of separation from the Catholic Church in communion with the See of Rome, is that the present Anglican Church is identically one and the same with that which St. Augustine planted in the sixth century, over which St. Thomas of Canterbury presided in the twelfth, and Warham at the commencement of the sixteenth; as properly, therefore, a part of the Catholic Church under the presidency of Archbishop Howley, as she ever was, or as the Church in Rome itself now is. This asserted unity is surely not of a very obvious kind, but liable to some serious difficulties. For to test its validity and soundness, let us bring together the above-named four distinguished individuals, and suppose them met in conference. Now will they concur in doctrine, discipline, or Church government? Are they in a visible or a real unity on any of these topics among themselves? Quite the reverse. There are three against one, and one against three. And they disagree so much, that those doctrines which the three former, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, and Archbishop Warham, teach as Divine truths, Archbishop Howley condemns and rejects; partly as blasphemous fables and dangerous deceptions; entirely as unwarranted by Scripture. Can they worship at the same altar? Quite the reverse. If consistent with their avowed principles, they cannot even be present at the same worship, lest they sin against God and His Church. Am I then to believe that here is a real unity? Am I to be told, there is no occasion for you to be dissatisfied with the Anglican, as not being a true portion of the Catholic Church, and a loving sister of the Roman Church, because she is identically the very same Church under Dr. Howley, as she was under Dr. Warham, or St. Thomas, or St. Augustine? I cannot believe what is so palpably untrue. And to test its truth a little farther, suppose myself, or any presbyter of the Anglican Church, coming before these four prelates, and submissively listening to receive Catholic verity from their concordant confession, as

knowing that the truth of God cannot vary, and with a real attachment to Catholic unity? It is undoubted, that while three of them would enjoin me, on pain of heavy spiritual penalties, to offer up the sacrifice of the mass, the inculcation on my flock of the doctrines, for example, of purgatory, of invocation, of the Blessed Virgin and of the saints,—the last-named, Dr. Howley, would as strongly forbid me to do the former, or to hold or teach either of the latter. While St. Augustine, St. Thomas, and Archbishop Warham, would require me to profess an hearty allegiance to the See of Rome, in matters spiritual and ecclesiastical, as Divinely constituted to rule and concentrate the kingdom of Christ on earth, Archbishop Howley would threaten me with heavy penalties, if I held the Bishop of Rome to have any jurisdiction at all in England, or any supremacy beyond his own see. I state no more than fact. And I ask again, am I then to be persuaded that there is a real unity between the Roman and the modern Anglican Church? Could I obey these differing prelates? or serve such opposite masters? Should I receive the right-hand of fellowship from all? Would not three of them reject me, if I knelt to receive the blessing of the fourth,—and the fourth, if I sought the blessing of the three? Can it be pretended that there is scriptural, visible unity, or any unity at all in this? Surely it is an unity, unheard of in the Church till the sixteenth century, tearing a man asunder if he attempts to embrace it. Can any person, then, seriously maintain that the Established Church of England is a proper part and parcel of the Catholic Church in communion with the See of Rome, and that her members need not move to join this Church, but may contentedly remain where they are? Far more consistent are they who, boldly denouncing the Roman Church as anti-Christian, separate from her in spirit and in profession, and account it their peculiar glory to keep as far aloof as possible from all connexion with, and assimilation to her.

I am aware that some of these learned and excellent persons who uphold the startling position that the

Roman and the established Anglican are but branches of the same Church, maintain that the only difference is, that the latter rejects certain errors, which the former has engrafted on herself: that she is the same Church purified. But I see not how this removes that objection to the visibility and perfection of the unity, which must strike every one as arising from the evident opposition of these two branches, in doctrine as well as discipline. Whether the debated points be truths or errors, the maintenance of them by the one, and the rejection of them by the other, is destructive not only of the effectiveness and the apparency,—but surely of the reality of their unity. There is not only no longer cooperation, but avowed opposition: and the unity is no longer such as the body of Christ requires to answer its designed end, as constituted for the diffusion and upholding of truth. It is no longer such an unity as all the chief figures used in the New Testament to set it forth suppose; for instance, that of a vine, an household, a family, a temple, a bride. If the Catholic Church in England, from St. Augustine's days to the Reformation (allowing for practical corruptions and abuses, which even in the Apostolic age had begun to prevail in different local or provincial Churches) was a sound member of the mystical body of the Lord,—of his visible Church,—the modern Anglican establishment is an unsound one; and if the latter be sound in her present doctrinal tenets, and her rejection of the supremacy of the see of St. Peter, the Catholic Church is to be regarded as most unsound. She is most unsound, whether she be regarded at any time previous or subsequent to the sixteenth century; for she is the same now as then, in doctrine and discipline. The one or the other must change, to preserve the proper unity of the whole, according to our Lord's prayer, and the apostolic descriptions of the Church. But, in truth, while they meet not in union under and with the same Head, and the one absolutely disclaims connexion with what the other dogmatically upholds as the supreme government and centre of unity, by divine appointment, for the whole body of Christ,—can a real and proper unity be ima-

gined to exist,—especially when there is also taken into consideration doctrinal differences; the one treating as fables, errors, and blasphemies, what the other inculcates on mankind as sound and sacred truths?

But here takes place a division of opinion among those who uphold the unity of the Roman Catholic Church and the modern Anglican Establishment. Till within the last ten or twelve years, very few were found among members of the latter who did not, in the strongest terms, repudiate those tenets of the Catholic Church respecting which so great a dissension arose in the sixteenth century. The Catholic Church in communion with the see of Rome was almost universally denounced as anti-christian in her doctrines. I enter here upon a part of my answer to your enquiry, on which I am obliged to enlarge a little, as it involves some points of the first importance in my coming to a practical decision, either to abide where I was, or to become a Catholic.

You will readily suppose that those tenets referred to, were matter of very frequent reflection with me. I had viewed them once as errors, though in different degrees, dangerous and opposite to the truth of the Gospel. I reluctantly and slowly came to a different conclusion. I knew and re-examined all the popular and chief objections against them. I gave them their full weight. I read, with as much impartiality as I could, the Catholic Church's vindication of her tenets. I examined the canons, and studied the catechism of the Council of Trent; that most full, most admirable, and authoritative exposition of her creed. The result was, that though I found ample ground for the allegation of practical abuses, as existing both in past and present times; though I found arguments brought forward by various Catholic writers, and some of very high repute, that I deemed unsatisfactory; texts of Scripture alleged in proof of this or that doctrine that could not, to my judgment, be brought to bear on it; still she had both Scripture and reason decisively on her side. Her own authorised statements were thoroughly satisfactory. When carefully examined into; impartially reflected

on; viewed distinct from practical abuses, and essentially springing from them; separated, I need hardly say, from the ignorant calumnies, and railing accusations of many Protestant writers and speakers against the Catholic Church; they became, in the best conclusion I could arrive at, Catholic verities, and wholesome and blessed truths. More than this, they became parts of a beauteous and complete system of truth, so admirably fitting into it, each in its proper place, leaving such a void, if rejected out of it, as declared that system, in spite of all which human corruption had done, and still did, to mar and deface it, the work of God; the revelation and provision of infinite wisdom and love for the happiness and holiness of his creatures. Examining the ablest works of Protestant controversialists, and comparing them with the Church's own authorised declarations of her doctrines, and the solid reasons in support of them which might be adduced, I was left with a sad impression of the misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the former. I know not a Protestant controversial writer (the authors of the *Oxford Tracts* alone excepted) whose works did not leave me more a Catholic than before; while I admit that there were some writings of Catholics, which, when I read them, threw me back upon Protestantism.

It is foreign to my purpose in this letter, to discuss these disputed tenets. I must content myself with assuring you, my dear friend, that I carefully examined them; I slowly received them; but I am convinced of the soundness of the Catholic doctrine concerning them all. I am satisfied that not one of them, nor all of them collectively, viewed even in connexion with the then existing abuses of them, were justifiable ground of that separation from the Church in communion with the see of Rome, which took place in the sixteenth century. And I conclude, that if not warrantable grounds for separation then, they afforded not warrantable grounds for continuing that separation now.

I was once pressed with this principle, that a person was bound to remain in that Church in which the providence of God had placed him, by his birth, baptism,

and calling into the ministry. But I do not understand the words, "that Church in which," &c. nor how there can be properly more than one Church; and if the providence of God has not placed me within her, the express command of God requires me to give up all considerations and join her. The principle referred to assumes what is to be proved. Moreover, I profess myself unable to discover, after all the reflection I can give to it, how the same principle, if sound, does not oblige a Quaker, or a Baptist, or a Scotch Presbyterian, to remain what he is. Nay, is even a Socinian minister of the Church of Geneva at liberty to leave the position where the providence of God has placed him by his birth, baptism, and ministerial calling? The points disputed between the Catholic Church and the English Establishment are not of a neutral character, if such could be; nor matter of indifference, nor of small moment; neither party owns them such; but treats them, as they evidently are, viewed in themselves, as matters of vital importance, and essential to sound faith, to hold or to reject. I could not perceive therefore, how the same principle which would oblige me to remain a member of the English Establishment, did not also justify one continuing in the Churches of Geneva or of Scotland, among the Baptists or Quakers.

But another ground has within the last few years been taken by individuals, so devout, so learned, and in every respect so estimable, as to make the novelty of the position they assume yet more startling, from the unquestioned fact of their own Christian conscientiousness. It is this, that the doctrines of the Catholic Church, generally considered as denied by Protestants, are not really denied by the Anglican Establishment, but that in principle, or tacitly, she admits them all; and that their apparent condemnation by her in her Thirty-nine Articles, is no condemnation, except of certain practical abuses of them which existed in the sixteenth century. It is, I say, maintained by many, and that publicly,—of whose integrity and piety, no more than of their learning and talents, can the least question be raised by all who have the privilege to know

them,—that the Anglican Church is truly Catholic as it respects these doctrines, and that no one who subscribes the Thirty-nine Articles is called on to reject purgatory, transubstantiation, invocation of the B. Virgin Mary, and of the saints, the efficacy of the sacrifice of the mass, as defined by the Council of Trent, &c. In other words, he may be a Tridentine Catholic at heart, and an Anglican clergyman by profession. This is a startling position, and, as might be supposed, has startled the Established Church throughout her length and breadth, from Berwick-upon-Tweed to the Land's End. A sound has gone forth from Oxford, which has troubled alike the metropolitan at Lambeth, and the humble curate in the Welsh mountains. It has penetrated the British senate; (peradventure it may not be unheard in another council chamber); it certainly has not been unheard in the Vatican. That the Anglican Established Church is, in her doctrines, essentially one with Rome, seems one of the surprising discoveries of this age of discovery. But such is the purport of the celebrated Tract No. 90. I am not going to discuss the truth or falsehood of the position maintained in that tract. I shall content myself with stating that if, after much careful examination of its arguments, and the authorities adduced in support of them, an individual finds himself incapable of assenting to them, and constrained either to reject the disputed doctrines, or to embrace them by joining the Catholic Church in communion with the see of Rome, it should justly cause no surprise. To specify upon one point, that of the Sacrifice of the Mass. It is easy to bring oneself to believe, that the distinction between a low or private mass, as celebrated at any period of the Church, and the public approved worship of the Catholic Church, can be such, as to constitute the former a blasphemous fable, while the latter remains an holy and acceptable offering? Read carefully the Thirty-first Article: "The sacrifice of masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the priests did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits." Is it easily credible that this strong language was directed

only against an abuse as to certain private masses? Have words any meaning? Are they to be considered as designed to communicate distinct ideas or not? What is the ground here alleged for the condemnation of the sacrifice of masses?—that “in them it was commonly said the priest did offer Christ,” &c. Why, this is what ever was, and still is, commonly said; and said substantially in all authoritative teaching of the Catholic Church, of the sacrifice of the mass; of the mass in general; of every mass; not of private masses only. Every priest teaches and commonly says this now. And every instructed Catholic knows and believes it to be the proper doctrine of the mass, and therein it is a propitiatory application of the sacrifice of Christ for the benefit of the quick and the dead. Does the circumstance of privacy so alter the essential character of the rite, as to make what is sacred truth in one case, to become a blasphemous fable in the other? Compare the latter and the former parts of the Article together, and can anything be clearer than that it was the supposition (altogether erroneous indeed) that the doctrine of the sacrifice of masses interfered with that of the one sacrifice of Christ upon Calvary, which induced the compilers of the Article to introduce this fierce condemnation of a Catholic verity. For the sacrifice of the mass, if it interfere at all, which assuredly when correctly understood, it does not, with the one sacrifice of Calvary, interferes as much in a public as in a private mass, in the case of one mass as of masses. Without uttering a harsh word upon the reasoning of Tract 90 in this case (and it is a fair specimen of its general reasoning), I will only say, that an individual may well be pardoned, if he cannot assent to its correctness. It need create no surprise, if, after careful reflection, he should come to the conclusion that, if Rome be right, the Anglican Church is thoroughly wrong; and that no compromise, as it respects the doctrine of the former rejected by the latter, can be allowed by one who would keep a clear conscience: that he must totally reject those Catholic verities as errors, or renounce his avowed connexion with the Anglican Church as now established. No one

who calmly reflects can, I think, judge it improbable, that another should see no such *via media* as the Tract 90 suggests, for himself to tread with safety. If others take the opposite alternative from himself, he will pray God to accept their piety and pardon their error. If others take neither alternative, but consider the doctrines of the Catholic Church, as defined at the Council of Trent, reconcilable with open communion and ministerial connexion with the Established Church in England, he will admire their learning and piety, firmly believe their Christian integrity and conscientiousness, but he will not cease to be astonished at the decision of their judgment. It will probably be his judgment, that if Rome be right, these persons do not go far enough; but if Rome be wrong, that they have gone much too far.

But permit me to offer you, my dear friend, a farther reflection, in connexion with this subject. Suppose the case to be as the respected individuals who approve of the tract referred to maintain, and that the Thirty-nine Articles are directed against certain abuses of the Catholic doctrines, not against the doctrines themselves; still it may well, I think, be asked of them: "Is this the way in which Catholic revealed truth, the truth of Christ's holy religion, is to be held and set forth before the world, by his Church?" Truth is light: and given to the world to enlighten it; and to edify and benefit souls by shining forth from the candlestick of the Church. It is not to be put under a table, a bushel, or a veil. Can it be said that the Anglican Church so holds out the light of the truth (if these doctrines be true, which is the case supposed), as that all may see it, when it requires the greatest ingenuity to discover that they are not directly denied by her articles?—when probably not one clergyman in ten thousand, who has subscribed these articles, ever supposed them to admit of such an interpretation? when even they who now find it in them, found it not till lately? when not a single living bishop of that Church recognizes the interpretation, nor will permit it to be publicly held from the pulpit?—can this be said to be

the holding forth Catholic truth in the Church, as a light shines in a candlestick?—is this the way in which the Divine head of the Church would have her use the talent of saving truth, entrusted to her keeping, for the instruction and edification of souls? A man may not concur in the outcry against a previous tract, on Reserve in communicating Religious Truth, but may regard it as being greatly misunderstood, and cruelly misrepresented; but he may apprehend a wide difference between an holy prudence and a wise caution in unfolding truth to men for their growth in grace by right and gradual apprehensions of the spiritual nourishment, which it is to those who receive it, and such concealment of it, under the most opposite appearances, as is involved in the arguments of Tract 90. Surely this is a consideration that should have weight. I add, however, no more on this point: but trust I have said enough to justify an individual, and to free him from the charge of ignorance, extreme weakness, or mental aberration, who, regarding as true the doctrines of the Catholic Church rejected generally by Protestants, should consider it his duty openly to avow his belief of them by joining her communion. You may deny the premises, that these doctrines are true; but if you allow the premises, I think you will not wonder at the conclusion.

At the commencement of my letter, I adverted to a topic to which I must briefly revert;—the fervency as well as punctuality of devotion within the Catholic Church. It has been most justly remarked, by some who are not of her communion, that there is a deep devotional feeling, and an ardour of piety in the present day among many, and these an increasing number, which find not scope for their exercise, nor sufficient help for their development, in any form or section of Protestantism: and that the Catholic Church alone presents a fair field for their exercise.

It seems, indeed, the hope of some, that parts of the Catholic system may be so engrafted on the Anglican discipline, and connected with its worship, that this great desideratum may be supplied, without joining the com-

munion of the Catholic Church. It remains to be seen whether the attempt will succeed,—whether it can be tried so as to allow of the possibility of success: or whether the Anglican discipline and worship are not too defective in various points, to ensure that obedience to rules, and that perseverance in religious duties, without which it certainly would be tried in vain. They who have essayed it can best say whether they have found it to succeed in their own individual experience.

I confess, while I utterly repudiate all idea of claiming any degree of pursuit of piety above others of my late brethren, that I sought in vain to satisfy the longings of my soul, by any combination of Catholic forms with Protestant doctrines—of Catholic devotion in private with the Anglican public worship. It was like the sewing of new cloth upon an old garment, whereby the rent is made worse. There are those whom the infinite and rich grace of God has led to desire the knowledge of and communion with Him, as their chief and only satisfying joy. They wish, but scarcely dare say, they aim to live to and for Him alone; He has presented Himself as the admirable and most excellent object of their affections; they seek to be holocausts to His glory, in His daily service: to keep their souls like altars, whereon the fire of devotion goes not out; their bodies, like temples, from which the presence of the Spirit departs not; to be able to say with truth—“To us, to live is Christ, and to die gain.” Have such tried and found that the Catholic Church alone, in her glowing daily devotions, her hourly offices, her symbolic rites, her inestimable practice of confession, with its attendant sacramental privileges, her soul-engrossing intercourse with the spirits of the just made perfect, her pious recognition of the less perfect departed faithful, whose purification for bliss is still proceeding,—in her inseparable connexion with the glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of martyrs, the admirable band of confessors, her wholesome and rich and well-connected truths,—that this Church, I say, alone presents what can satisfy their high, holy, and heavenly desires and aims? It cannot but be, that in this cir-

cumstance they find also, besides other considerations; that which commends her to their regard, their adhesion, their dutiful and devoted allegiance. They find and admire in her the beauty of the spouse of Christ; they love and serve her, for her own sake, and for His, whose beloved bride she is. They find her equally the school of heavenly wisdom and godly simplicity; of Christian dignity, and child-like humility. She presents, combined, the characters of the serpent and the dove. In her is conjoined true mortification and self-denial, with that satisfaction to which the prophet refers: "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." The fruit of her devotions is the elevation of the soul to God, and the abasement which keeps it low in the dust of humiliation. Holiness unto the Lord is written on the bells of her horses. The beauty of holiness is the character of her worship. The peace of God, passing all understanding, is the fruit of communion with her, in all who faithfully walk according to her rule. As one of these (I speak as a fool), I must say of her—of the Catholic Church: "Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be unto thee. I wish thee good luck in the name of the Lord."

I beg you not to suppose that I hastily condemn those who take a different view from my own on the matters of this letter, which I have written in self-justification, and as some answer to an enquiry now often made of me: "Why are you become a Catholic?" I trust I shall be pardoned, if, in vindicating myself, I find it difficult to forbear essaying to affect others with an apprehension of the good I sought, and hitherto have found.

The considerations which I have in this letter put before you, were the chief of those which, some more, some less, some earlier, some later, influenced me to join the Catholic Church in communion with the See of Rome. The step was full fraught with trial: trials,

at present in my power. But then did I shrink from such a trial as the renewal of strength in secret. I will not deny that they were years of poverty and endurance; but I found the refreshing of strength in my weakness and sustaining the through them. That word *sanctuary* is a name that I was not speaking of myself. I would use a sanctuary and that time. See Rom. vii. 17.

The *sanctuary* of these times is apparently coming on. In the heart of Catholic and Protestant principles, amidst the civil war between holy order on the one hand, and human freedom on the other. Christianity and infidelity are in the argument, measuring their forces for some great battle. The *sanctuary* is developing itself under various forms, according to the country within the government under which it is found. In persecuted Catholic countries it is showing itself in the destruction of religious institutions, desecration of sacred things, seizure of property dedicated to God, contempt of the profession of faith, political independence, &c. In this country it develops itself in various projects and schemes, semi-religious and semi-political, but altogether antichristian, which are attracting within their vortex unstable and worldly, and proud minds; while the power of human intellect, and the discoveries of science, are indirectly tending to aid infidelity against Christianity, by the self-importance and independence of God with which they possess men. A war against Christ, and therefore against his Church, his now vulnerable body—there can be no war against the one that is not against the other—is begun by infidel theorists and political demagogues; and it is more or less manifested as they have or have not opportunity and power. Christianity, on the other hand, is gathering her strength to withstand the battle against her. How? By repairing her time-honoured walls; strengthening her ancient battlements and defences; presenting her compact, insulated position, as the City of God in the midst of the earth. She is summoning her citizens out of all the world, the elect people of God, to all the duties and privileges to which she calls them; she is

resuming her original strength and consolidation, to meet the assaults of Infidelity, as she formerly met those of Paganism and then those of Heresy. The ark of God is repairing, against the pouring forth of the desolating flood. I speak of repairs, because marks of decay are visible; effects of long neglect, laxity of discipline, sloth, timidity, and sin. She is calling upon all who are on the Lord's side, to secure themselves against the coming conflict, by taking refuge within her walls, while, as the Lord's soldiers, they aid her against His, her, and their enemies. "Abide ye not (she says) where ye now are, in unwall'd villages and scattered places, whereunto ye went out in days of license, of anarchy, and error, in the days of God's displeasure against me, and visitation of human corruption. For therein is no refuge for you against the enemy; and you are no aid to me." Especially to members of the Anglican Church, she says: "You share, in common with myself, in this land (for you reach no farther), the attacks of our common foe. This is for your honour. But think not you will escape where you are. The city of God is but one. You are too separate, while you are rejecting my supreme earthly Head, my long-established discipline, my catholic order to be a part of that city. Whatever may be your apparent unity, you are really separate. Your strength is thrown away in attempting to protect what is indefensible. But join me: aid in repairing my fences against the foe; in reviving the courage of my true citizens, recovering ancient discipline, and reanimating decaying strength. Your return to me will be like health to the feeble, and strength to the faint; like an infusion of young blood into an aged frame. You will be welcomed with gladness, and rejoiced over with singing, and the joy of earth will be re-echoed and sustained by that of heaven: the devout thanksgivings of the sixteenth Gregory for the recovery of the strayed sheep of his flock, will be taken up by the first of his name, the Saint in heaven, for the renewal of that conversion of England, for which both he on earth so fervently prays, and He in heaven so continually intercedes."

The present, my dear friend, is a solemn time for the Church of Christ. It is the pause before the battle; a time, as respects every well-disposed soldier of the Lord, of recollection, of watchfulness and prayer, review of his heart and life; of his aims and purposes; and of decision to do his duty (God enabling him) to his Saviour and his Church. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem (he will say), let my right-hand forget her cunning. Yea, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Will you not concur in that prayer,—“O remember not against us former iniquities; let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for Thy name's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?—So we thy people, and the sheep of thy pasture, will give Thee thanks for ever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations.”

I remain, my dear Friend,

Very faithfully yours,

RICHARD WALDO SIBTHORP.

NOTE.

Since the last edition of this letter it has been communicated to me, that some persons had interpreted the passage in page 20 to contain a justification of their own continuance in what they perceived to be a less excellent rule; because, though not in the body, they might yet be considered to be pervaded by the soul of the Church. But it was very far from my intention to intimate that a person may justifiably adhere to what he is satisfied is a less excellent rule, or to excuse perseverance in perceived error. As soon as union with the body of the Church Catholic becomes, from the acquisition of light and knowledge, a matter properly of decision, or one on which he exercises deliberate choice, continuance in separation from it has no plea in its defence. A person must not, then, satisfy himself, or take comfort in the idea, that though not in the body, he is included in the soul of the Church.

